Iran-Israeli Relations: Is Military Conflict Inevitable? Part 2

A number of international experts believe that after the PLO occurred on the official level in IRI the Iranian leadership had taken the posture of promoting international terrorism, creating further threats to peace. At the same time appeals to wipe out “a cancer” started to be heard. The spell was first voiced by Ayatollah Hamejni, then was taken over his successor Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Turning to the experience of other countries, it is a well-known fact that the unresolved domestic problems of any State are sometimes hidden behind a foreign policy threats, regardless of whether there is any risk. In the case of Iran, it can be said that during the “post-revolution period" the country passed through different stages of development – both economic downturns and periods of its recovery were observed. Over the years, Iran has adapted to the prevailing so far certain isolation. But the situation became really worse after the tightening of international sanctions on the country's nuclear program. In large part this was supported by repeated calls of Israel to “punish Iran for aggressiveness” and a potential “nuclear threat” allegedly posed ever from that country.

Without addressing the question in detail about the nature of Iran's nuclear programme, we’ll just note in this article, that another reason for the growing confrontation is the Iran's support of radical groups “Hamas”, “Hezbollah” and others openly combating against Israel.

According to our observations, while Iran has been busy preparing for the elections last year, the Israeli side gradually exaggerated the tensions against Iran. But, as we can see, the mutual confrontation, which hypothetically could be escalated into military action, still has a virtual character.

Israeli journalist Mikhail Kheifets says, for example, “I am not sure at all that there is a serious threat to Israel from Iran”. He believes that the Iranian threat is “looming” more over the neighbouring Arab States. Iran, like Iraq of Saddam Hussein sought to “take in hand the whole Middle East oil. Israel has no oil. From this point of view, Iran is not interested in Israel”. And the attacks against Israel, as they say, are the traditional playing of Iran's attempts to cover up the Arab neighbours. Though the leaders of Israel, as it has already been told, still regard Iran as a real threat to the national interest and will use all available means to deprive Iran of possessing military instruments (nuclear weapons in particular) for approval of its role as a regional leader.

According to some observers, the Israelis, probably hoping to use its own military capabilities, believe that their country has a real opportunity to block the Iranian nuclear programme and, consequently, to create serious obstacles for Iran to uphold its position as a regional power. It argues that even if the public condemnation of the Israeli actions are assumed to emerge from Saudi Arabia and several other Gulf countries, still the Persian monarchies would support them informally.

The danger of the “great war” against Iran persists and it comes, as some researchers believe, not only from Israel. The situation in the Persian Gulf is volatile. A famous expert on Iran Vladimir Sazhin says: “Today there is such a power on the part of the United States, Britain and other countries, that an accidental shot could start a major war, while nobody wants it”.
If you look at today's real interests of Tel Aviv and Tehran, some observers believe that both States are threatened by the "Arab spring", though they are unwilling to acknowledge this fact publicly. Both Israel and Iran have an interest in keeping the Assad regime in Syria, anyway, they are against the continuation of the civil war and the split of the country. Some experts even believe that if the cooperation between the two countries would be possible today, they could preserve stability in Syria, and Russia's interest as well. Israeli writer and politician Avigdor Eskin, arguing in favor of such a grandiose plan, believes that “Israeli-Iranian contacts in should be started in Moscow at the level of non-governmental organizations. First of all, it should be a meeting between the Israeli and Iranian religious authorities. These people can prepare the ground for such a meeting in Moscow”.

What we have is a fantastic idea, even though it's a very positive solution of the war and peace problem. And if some figures within the Israeli public, as we have seen above, are willing to “build bridges” with Iran, the ruling elite appears to be not yet ripe for that. Moreover, by definition of a number of Israeli political analysts, the Administration uses such an expression as “Entourage” through alliances and partnerships with neighboring countries.

Hence there is an emphasis of the Jewish State to Azerbaijan, which for many years has had extremely complex and contradictory relationships with Iran. And today the Iran-Azerbaijan bilateral relations are experiencing hard times. Israel actively flirting with Azerbaijan, including the supply of arms, is considered in the IRI as a dangerous geopolitical challenge. According to Professor of the University of Technology in Tehran, Sayed Javad Miri, "Iran is absolutely convinced that the problems of the Caucasus can only be resolved by the countries of the region and the presence of non-regional players such as the United Kingdom, China, the United States or Israel only worsens the situation."

It is worth to notice that Iranian leaders give Russia, as a regional major power, an important place in the settlement of conflicts in the Caucasus, as well as the normalization of Iran-Israeli-American relations. And both Iran and Israel, as noted by observers (notably, Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation) are convinced that Moscow does not want to repeat the Libyan scenario in Syria and does not want the patron of the Assad regime, - Iran has lost an important ally, and sees a threat of a conservative Sunni Salafi front creation in the Middle East, led by Saudi Arabia. As we know, few days ago at the G8 Summit in Ireland Russia confirmed the continuity of this position, though it has appeared in certain isolation among the "well-fed" Western countries.

Returning to the issue delivered in the header, we can reasonably assume that with the new President in Iran and emerged understanding between the leaders of the United States and a number of leading countries of the West on the need for peaceful resolution of the conflict in Syria would come easing of tensions between Iran and Israel. It is unlikely that the current configuration of forces in the world and in the region, the two countries would begin military action against each other, since otherwise, could begin "great war" with the risk to turn into a third world war.

*Sergey Pivin, expert on the Middle East, exclusively for the Internet magazine "New Eastern Outlook".*